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## News Advisory

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### **MOLINA HEALTHCARE OF WASHINGTON HONORS COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS AT ITS 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL RECEPTION HELD IN RENTON**

*Honorees Receive \$1,000 Each to Donate to Charity of Choice*

**Oct. 8, 2018 - SEATTLE** – Molina Healthcare of Washington presented nine individuals with its prestigious Community Champions Award at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual reception honoring outstanding community leaders and advocates for the underserved throughout Washington state.

“At Molina Healthcare, it is our privilege and responsibility to recognize and reward the unsung heroes who tirelessly work to improve the health of our communities every day,” said Peter Adler, president of Molina Healthcare of Washington. “Each recipient sets an example to others in their respective communities that giving back – no matter how, why, where or to whom – is noble and worthy of celebration. We owe those daily heroes in our communities a debt of gratitude.”

The evening’s honorees included:

- **Jon Carollo** of Spokane is a voice and force for individuals experiencing homelessness and has dedicated both his professional and personal life to helping others. As development director for Volunteers of America, he advocates for this vulnerable population by creating programs and raising funds that help supply everyday necessities. This year he created the “Mardi Bra” program, collecting donations like bras, underwear and personal hygiene items for women, who are often overlooked among the homeless. Carollo is donating his \$1000 grant to Volunteers of America.
- **Dr. Monica Dixon** of Sequim is co-founder and board president of the Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition. As a psychologist and registered dietician, Dr. Dixon partners with dozens of other health advocates in Clallam County with the goal of helping establish healthy eating habits and active living in the communities she serves. Dr. Dixon is donating her grant to the Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition.
- **Socorro Garcia** of Prescott has dedicated over 22 years to building resources for Spanish-speaking residents and empowering those in need for the Promotora de Salud of the Community Health Worker Coalition for Migrants and Refugees. Garcia’s personal experience inspired her to eventually organize fairs covering everything from healthcare, financial to cultural and linguistic challenges migrant and refugee populations face daily. She is donating her grant to Mano a Mano.

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- **Kael Johnson** of Tacoma is a selfless high school freshman who founded Care Closets, a resource center for students that is stocked with necessities such as food, clothes and hygiene products. The idea for Care Closets was born when Johnson was in seventh grade and overheard a classmate ask for money to buy food from a vending machine. That student and his family ran out of food. After learning this was a reality for many other kids in his community, Johnson stepped up and partnered with the Hunger Task Force to create Care Closets. In addition to his community efforts, Johnson was class president last year and a member of the leadership, wrestling, track and lacrosse teams. He is donating his grant to Bethel Community Service.
  - **Will Keller** of Omak is described as someone who gives – to his church, community and the homeless – with no expectation of rewards. Keller is active in Okanogan’s homeless shelter, a small facility currently open only in winter, and is helping open a new, larger facility that will be open year-round. Keller is donating his grant to the Okanogan Community Homeless Shelter.
  - **Veronica Kim** of Seattle, a breast cancer survivor whose lifelong mission is to improve access to health care for King County’s diverse population, started a program to increase breast cancer screenings for Asian immigrant women. An immigrant herself, she understands the barriers of preventative care in female immigrant populations. For over 15 years, Kim has helped to organize the Susan G. Komen Puget Sound Race for the Cure and other fundraisers. She is donating her grant to International Community Health Services.
  - **Jessica DeFrees, Brettney Downing and Cory Fitzgibbon** of Vancouver were the final recipients of the Community Champions awards Thursday evening for their support of chemically-dependent inmates being released from jail. DeFrees partnered with the Clark County Sheriff’s Office in 2016 to create Community Voices Are Born REACH Too (CVAB REACH Too) to help recovering addicts with everything from transportation to and from interviews and health appointments to probation check-ins. DeFrees, Downing and Fitzgibbon all have overcome addiction in their past. The group is donating their grant to CVAB of Vancouver.

Molina’s Community Champions were honored at a reception presented by Molina Healthcare of Washington president Peter Adler at the Renton Pavilion on Thursday, September 27. The reception included a lively tribal welcome and performance by Wenatchee High School’s “Mariachi Huenachi,” as well as Girl Scout Troup 42263 leading attendees with the pledge of allegiance.

### **About Molina Healthcare of Washington**

Molina Healthcare of Washington has been providing government-funded care for low-income individuals for nearly 20 years. As of June 2018, the organization serves approximately 776,000 members through Medicaid, Medicare and the Health Benefit Exchange programs across the state of Washington. Additionally, Molina Healthcare operates a primary care clinic, MyHealth-Everett, in Everett, Washington. Visit [MolinaHealthcare.com](http://MolinaHealthcare.com) and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).